

VICTORY VILLA GARDENS
601 Compass Road
Middle River
Baltimore County
Maryland

HABS MD-1222
HABS MD-1222

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

VICTORY VILLA GARDENS

HABS No. MD-1222

- Location:** 601 Compass Road, Middle River, Baltimore County, Maryland
- Significance:** Victory Villa Gardens was built by the Farm Security Administration during 1943 as defense worker public housing for the Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Company.
- Description:** Victory Villa Gardens was a complex of wood-frame, one-story multi-family dwellings arranged on a series of curving streets. Many of the structures included four attached units, but others had two or six units. Parallel rows of structures were grouped with the rear façade facing the street and the front façade facing a shared garden courtyard. This site planning reflected garden city ideals of separating pedestrian and green space from automobile traffic and other utilitarian concerns, most recently promoted at the Federal planned community of Greenbelt, Maryland. The structures stood on concrete piers and had side-gable roofs covered by asphalt shingles. The windows were six over six wood sash and the walls sheathed with wood clapboards.
- History:** Victory Villa Gardens was built by the Farm Security Administration during 1943 as World War II defense worker public housing. Between 1939 and 1943, the number of employees at the Glenn L. Martin airplane manufacturing facilities in Middle River, Maryland mushroomed from 3,000 to 52,000. The small town of Middle River, with 161 residents in 1939, and its local building community were unprepared and unequipped to house the massive influx of newcomers.¹
- The Martin Company started the expansion of residential facilities in Middle River and called on the Federal government to continue. In 1941, the Maryland State Planning Commission hired Hale Walker, planner for Greenbelt for the Farm Security Administration, and Irving C. Root of the National Park Service to prepare a master plan for Middle River. Their plan incorporated many garden city features already started by the Martin Company housing – pedestrian paths to playgrounds and schools, curving

¹ Jack Breihan, "Necessary Visions: Community Planning in Wartime," *Maryland Humanities* 71 (November 1998): 11.

residential streets separate from the new dual highways of Martin and Eastern Boulevards and neighborhood strip shopping centers.²

Construction of the single-family house and duplexes began in the adjacent Victory Villa subdivision in 1942. In 1943 the Farm Security Administration built 1,000 apartment units for Victory Villa Gardens. These one-story wood frame multi-family dwellings were arranged in a series of curving streets named after Air Force bases. The careful site planning and use of communal green space reflected a contemporary interest in using planning to make modest, low cost housing more socially and aesthetically viable. In recent decades the complex was operated as private rentals. In 2005 Victory Villa Gardens was demolished and replaced by a new Ryan Homes housing development called Miramar Landing.

Sources: Breihan, Jack. "Necessary Visions: Community Planning in Wartime," *Maryland Humanities* 71 (November 1998): 11-14.

Sanborn Map Company, Middle River, Maryland. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1948.

Historian: Lisa Pfueller Davidson, 2006

**Project
Information:**

This short form history was prepared to supplement photographic documentation of World War II-era resources in Middle River. During 2004-05 HABS staff photographer James Rosenthal photographed a series of sites in Baltimore City and County in preparation for the *Buildings of Maryland* publication. Maryland Historical Trust sponsored the photography project and is producing *Buildings of Maryland* as part of the Society of Architectural Historians' *Buildings of the United States* series with the University of Virginia Press.

² Breihan, 12.